



Washington State Senate

June 16, 2008

Senator Lisa Brown
Senate Majority Leader
Legislative Building 307
Olympia, WA 98504

Representative Frank Chopp
Speaker of the House
Legislative Building 339C
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senator Brown and Speaker Chopp,

Friday's detailed news report of Governor Gregoire's participation in tribal compact negotiations raises serious questions about the lack of oversight in this process. It is a concern we've raised before, both with regard to lack of Legislative oversight and the appearance of conflict between the governor's role as both chief negotiator and campaign benefactor.

We are writing to request that the Legislature immediately convene a bipartisan task force to conduct a fact-finding investigation and answer questions that have been raised by this report. Among the questions we would like answered are the following:

- 1) Why, while intervening in negotiations on behalf of Washington taxpayers, did the Governor turn away hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue sharing when her own gambling commission and the Spokane Tribe had already reached agreement on such a plan?
- 2) What were the communications related to the negotiations between the Governor, her chief of staff, the gambling commission, and the Spokane Tribe from 2005 to December 2006 when the Governor eventually outlined the new agreement that eliminated revenue sharing? We believe all relevant communications should be made public and the Governor's staff should be interviewed by the task force.
- 3) Which tribes, if any, requested that the Governor's office step in to strike revenue sharing from the tribal compact?
- 4) Were there promises of campaign support, or other inducements, made by tribes to any representatives of the Governor, including party officials, in exchange for the Governor's action to drop state revenue sharing, while expanding the authorization for slots, higher-stakes wagering, and off-reservation gaming sites?
- 5) What was the state's estimate of annual revenues that would have come to the state had the original Gambling Commission compact with the Spokane Tribe, which included revenue sharing, been approved by the Governor?

The decisions and actions of elected officials with regard to the agreement reached between the Tribe and the Governor's office has direct impacts on the citizens of our state. The people we represent have a justifiable expectation that their interests are being strenuously protected in these negotiations. There are now serious questions as to whether the Governor and her appointees advocated for the interests of the taxpaying public, or if other competing interests were served at the taxpayers' expense.

By convening a task force immediately and conducting hearings in an expedited manner, we can quickly verify or dismiss questions of impropriety with regard to these negotiations.

We propose that the task force be bipartisan and bicameral. If it suits you, it may include two members of each majority caucus and one member of each minority caucus, comprising four Democrat legislators and two Republican legislators. This is proportionate to the current makeup in both the House and Senate. We would welcome the inclusion of those legislators who also serve as members of recognized tribes, so as to ensure a balance of interests in what we hope will be a fair and thorough examination of the facts.

Again, we believe time is of the essence, to reach a rapid conclusion of this investigation that will dictate whether further response is needed or if questions are answered to our satisfaction, in which case the matter can be put to rest. We look forward to your timely response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Hewitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" being more prominent than the last name "Hewitt".

Senator Mike Hewitt
Senate Republican Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Ericksen". The signature is cursive and includes a circled "11" at the beginning, likely a reference to a legislative district or office number.

Representative Doug Ericksen
Deputy House Republican Leader